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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#) [MK](#)
SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: SENATORS VOINOVICH AND SHAHEEN URGE SPEEDY
SOLUTION TO NAME DISPUTE

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Macedonia is committed to solving the name dispute with Greece, but Athens must also compromise, PM Gruevski told Senators Voinovich and Shaheen Feb 17. Gruevski outlined his government's continuing commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration and his efforts to reach out to Greek PM Papandreou. Senators Voinovich and Shaheen praised Macedonia's progress in building a multiethnic state and expressed U.S. gratitude for Macedonia's contributions to Afghanistan. They urged that Macedonia and Greece reach an agreement on the name issue urgently. (End Summary)

¶2. (SBU) Senators George Voinovich and Jeanne Shaheen paid a brief visit to Skopje Feb 17, meeting Ambassador Reeker and the Country Team, then PM Gruevski. Gruevski opened the meeting by thanking the United States for its continued friendship and support for Macedonia's NATO accession. The PM assured the Senators that Macedonia remained fully committed to solving the name issue and joining NATO. He also noted that he had reached out to Greek PM Papandreou by phone in order to establish a dialogue with him in order to resolve the issue, and offered to meet Papandreou at the latter's convenience. Gruevski said Macedonia would do its best to resolve the name dispute with Greece in the first half of 2010 but felt that a resolution would be almost impossible without the help of the international community, and especially the U.S. He also lamented the difficult political situation he was faced with in solving the name issue, claiming the Greeks wanted also to "change our identity." Gruevski repeated that it was in Macedonia's best interests to have positive relations with Greece, but any solution would have to be acceptable to the citizens in both countries. In Macedonia, any agreement would require holding a referendum.

¶3. (SBU) Senators Voinovich and Shaheen both expressed their gratitude to the PM for Macedonia's continued contributions to NATO and the international peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan. They also emphasized the importance of Macedonia's speedy accession to NATO, both for Macedonia's as well as the Alliance's future. Senator Voinovich told the PM that Washington was committed to helping Macedonia find a resolution to the name issue and stressed to the PM that it was critical that it be resolved as quickly as possible. Both Senators said they believed Macedonia's window of opportunity for finding a resolution was closing. Senator Voinovich said Greek PM Papandreou showed a clear understanding of how important an expedient resolution to the name issue was during their recent meeting and that this created an opportunity for Gruevski. Senator Voinovich also said he was concerned that any political fallout from the economic crisis in Greece would distract attention from the name issue and therefore made a quick resolution even more important. Both Senators told Gruevski that if he and Papandreou made solving the issue a top priority and showed strong leadership a resolution could be achieved.

¶4. (U) CODEL Voinovich cleared this cable.

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